## EASTERN HOPHORNBEAM

## Ostrya virginiana (Mill.) K. Koch.

OTHER COMMON NAMES: American hophornbeam, Hornbeam, Ironwood.

FORM: Usually 20-40 feet high with a short trunk 8-15 inches in diameter, occasionally 70 feet tall with a diameter of 2 feet; crown rather high, open, broad round-topped, formed by widely spreading, often drooping, branches with ascending branchlets.

BARK: Grayish-brown, thin, roughened by flattish scales which are loose at the end and give a shreddy appearance to the bole.

TWIGS: At first slender, hairy, green, later smooth, lustrous, dark brown.

LEAVES: Alternate, simple, ovate-oblong to ovate-lanceolate, 3-5 inches long, 11/2-2 inches wide, acuminate or acute at the apex, rounded or cordate and inequilateral at the base, finely doubly serrate.

FLOWERS: Appear with leaves, monoecious, in aments; staminate aments preformed preceding season in about threes at end of twigs, about 2 inches long in the spring; pistillate flowers in erect aments, each enclosed in a hairy bladder-like bract.

FRUIT: A long, pendulous, creamy-white, cone-like body 1 1/2-21/.2 inches long, 2/3-l inch wide, consisting of bladder-like involucres forming a hop-like fruit; fruiting involucre 3/4 inch long, stiff, stinging hairs at base, enclosing a flattened, chestnut-brown nutlet.

WINTER BUDS: Alternate, ovate, 1/4 inch long, sharp-pointed, divergent, slightly pubescent, gummy, covered with 8 visible, longitudinally striated, 4-ranked scales; terminal b u d a b s e n t.

WOOD: Very heavy, hard, strong, tough, close-grained, light brown, reddish-brown or nearly white, with thick pale white sapwood.

USES: Tool handles, fuel.

HABITAT: Dry, gravelly, and stony soils, occasionally moist situations.

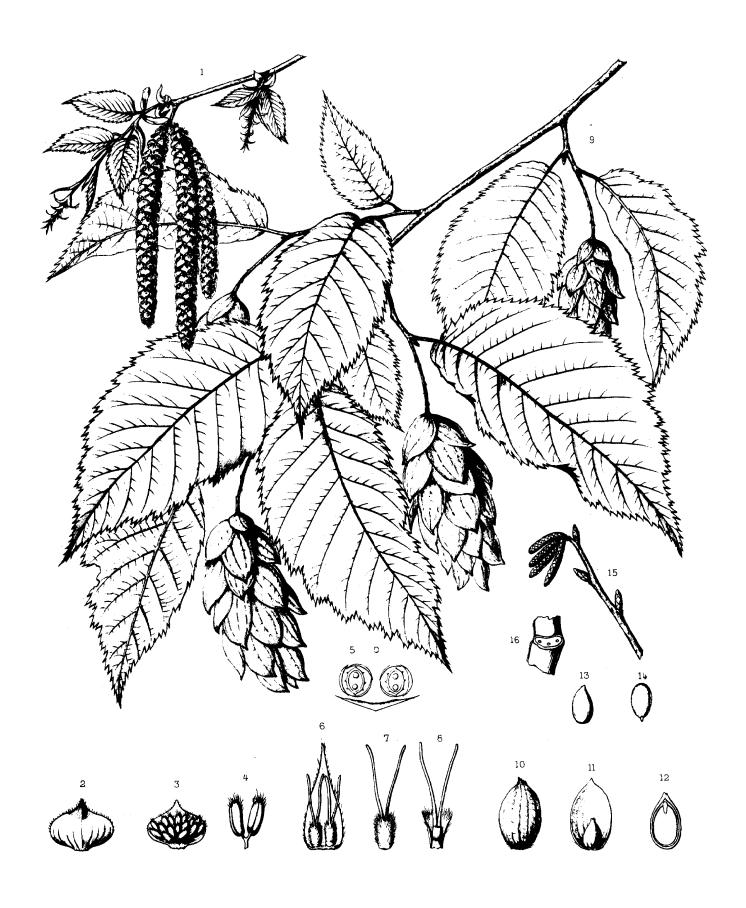
DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS: Hop-like fruit; grayish-brown bark peels in narrow flat scales; 2-ranked leaf scars with 3-bundle scars; hardness of wood.

DISTRIBUTION IN ALABAMA: Fairly well distributed over the state.

## EXPLANATION OF PLATE

- 1. A flowering branch
- 2. A scale of the staminate ament, rear view
- 3. A staminate flower with its scale, front view
- 4. A stamen
- 5. Diagram of a pistillate flower
- 6. Pistillate flower
- 7. A pistillate flower enclosed in its bract and bractlets
- 8. A pistillate flower with its bract and bractlets laid open

- 9. A fruiting branch
- 10. A fruiting involucre
- 11. Vertical section of a fruiting involucre, showing the nut
- 12. Vertical section of a nut
- 13. A seed
- 14. An embryo
- 15. A winter branch with staminate aments
- 16. A leaf scar



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Plate 30